

Message Text

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ACTION AGR-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AID-20 EB-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03

IGA-02 IO-14 SCI-06 INT-08 SAJ-01 SWF-02 COME-00

DRC-01 /145 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7893

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, BEXP, BU

SUBJECT: GRAIN CONDITIONS IN BULGARIA

REF: STATE 078157

1. IN EARLY APRIL BULGARIAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
ISSUED DECREE ON MEASURES TO SAVE WATER RESOURCES IN
FACE OF POSSIBLE DROUGHT CONDITIONS THIS SPRING.
ACCORDING TO MEETING OF EXPERTS HELD IN SOFIA APRIL 9
WATER LEVELS IN BULGARIAN RESERVOIRS DOWN 500 MILLION
CUBIC METERS OVER LAST YEAR'S LEVELS.

2. BULGARIAN MEDIA HAVE ADMITTED POSSIBILITY EXISTS
FOR SERIOUS DROUGHT. AMONG EMERGENCY MEASURES BEING
ADOPTED IS SPECIAL ALLOCATION OF 4 MILLION LEVA FOR
CONSTRUCTION OF PUMPING STATIONS TO TAP NEW UNDERGROUND
SOURCES. IT IS HOPED TO OBTAIN AN ADDITIONAL 70 MILLION
CUBIC METERS, SUFFICIENT TO IRRIGATE 140,000 DECARES.
LATEST PUBLISHED ESTIMATES (RABOTNICHESKO DELO APRIL

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10) STATE THAT SUFFICIENT WATER AVAILABLE TO IRRIGATE

2 MILLION DECARES OF LAND THROUGH END OF MAY.

3. PRECIPITATION LEVELS SINCE LATE FALL HAS BEEN BELOW NORMAL AND SNOW COVER THROUGHOUT THE WINTER MINIMAL. NONETHELESS BULGARIA HAS HAD MODERATE RAIN FALL IN LAST WEEK, WHICH IS CONTINUING, AND WHICH SHOULD HELP.

4. WHILE EMBASSY HAS NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON GRAINS, ONE US AGRONOMIST WORKING IN CENTRAL PLOVDIV VALLEY REPORTED APRIL 18 AT SOIL HUMIDITY ONLY SLIGHTLY ABOVE NORMAL AND EVEN THAT WILL BE ALLEVIATED BY RECENT RAINFALL.

5. WE ASSUME FROM MEDIA COMMENTS THAT GOB IS CONCERNED AT POSSIBLE DROUGHT, SINCE IT IS BEING DESCRIBED IN FAIRLY STRONG AND OBJECTIVE TERMS. BULGARIAN PARTY FIRST SECRETARY TODOR ZHIVKOV SPOKE AT RALLY IN PLOVDIV IN LATE MARCH AND ADMITTING POSSIBILITY OF DROUGHT, REMINDED LISTENERS THAT UNDER MODERN SYSTEM OF AGRICULTURE, "EVERYONE IS ASSURED BREAD, EVEN IN DIFFICULT YEARS".

6. WE HAVE NO EXACT FIGURES ON TOTAL GRAIN AREA SOWN IN 1974, ALTHOUGH NEW EFFORT BEING LAUNCHED THIS YEAR TO UTILIZE MOUNTAINOUS AND SEMI-MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS FOR PRODUCTION OF ANIMAL FODDER, INCLUDING SOME GRAINS WHICH WILL DEPEND ALMOST ENTIRELY ON NATURAL RAINFALL.

7. IN SUMMARY WE ASSESS SITUATION AS POTENTIALLY SERIOUS BUT RECENT RAINS SHOULD HAVE ALLEVIATED IT AND MUCH WILL DEPEND ON FURTHER SPRING RAINS. IF NORMAL OR ABOVE NORMAL, SITUATION ESPECIALLY WITH SPRING GRAINS MAY BE ALRIGHT. LONG-RANGE WEATHER FORECAST, HOWEVER, IS FOR BELOW NORMAL PRECIPITATION THROUGH MID MAY WHICH, IF TRUE, COULD CAUSE BULGARIANS VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS.
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